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New York

THEATRE CRITICS'

Reviews

1943

INDEX

Stage Play	Pages
*All for All	271, 272, 273
*Another Love Story	260, 261, 262
Apology	351, 352, 353
†*Artists and Models	239, 240, 241, 242
Ask My Friend Sandy	378, 379, 380
Barber Had Two Sons (The)	383, 384, 385
Blossom Time	286, 287, 288
Boy Meets Girl	316, 317
Bright Lights of 1944	276, 277, 278
Chauve Souris 1943	298, 299, 300
Counterattack	380, 381, 382
Dark Eyes	390, 391, 392
*Early to Bed	314, 315, 316
Family (The)	344, 345, 346
First Million (The)	330, 331, 332
For Your Pleasure	374, 375, 376
Hairpin Harmony	269, 270
*Harriet	364, 365, 366
*Kiss and Tell	356, 357, 358
Land of Fame	274, 275, 276
*Laugh Time	284, 285, 286
*Manhattan Nocturne	246, 247, 248
Men in Shadow	360, 361, 362
*Merry Widow (The)	301, 302, 303
Milky Way (The)	317
Moon Vine (The)	372, 373, 374

Stage Play	Pages
Murder Without Crime	293, 294, 295
My Dear Public	281, 282, 283
*Naked Genius (The)	253, 254, 255
*New Life (A)	279, 280, 281
Nine Girls	393, 394, 395
*Oklahoma	341, 342, 343
*One Touch of Venus	264, 265, 266
*Othello	256, 257, 258
†*Outrageous Fortune	237, 238, 239
Patriots (The)	385, 386, 387, 388
†Petrified Forest (The)	242
Richard III	348, 349, 350
Run Little Chillun	296, 297, 298
Slightly Married	248, 248, 250
Snark Was a Boojum (The)	288, 289, 290
*Something for the Boys	398, 399, 400
Sons and Soldiers	325, 326, 327
Student Prince (The)	320, 321, 322
This Rock	369, 370, 371
Those Endearing Young Charms	318, 319, 320
*Three's a Family	228, 329, 330
*Tomorrow the World	334, 335,'336
Try and Get It	306, 307, 308
*Two Mrs. Carrolls (The)	304, 305, 306
Vagabond King (The)	311, 312, 313
*Victory Belles	244, 245, 246
*Ziegfeld Follies	338, 339, 340

PRODUCTIONS CONTINUING

Reviews appeared in the 1942 CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS

Stage Play	Pages
*Doughgirls (The)	124, 125, 126
*Janie	244, 245, 246
*Rosalinda	187, 188, 189
*Star and Garter	262, 263, 264

Reviews appeared in the 1941 CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS

*Angel Street	182, 183, 184, 185
*Arsenic and Old Lace	417, 418, 419, 420
*Life With Father	489, 490, 491

*Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of November 8, 1943.

†*"The Petrified Forest" opened Monday, November 1st, at the New Amsterdam Roof.*
†*"Outrageous Fortune" opened Wednesday, November 3rd, at the 48th St. Theatre.*
†*"Artists and Models" opened Friday, November 6th, at the Broadway Theatre.*

THEATRE CRITICS' REVIEWS IS A COMPLETE GUIDE AND RECORD TO THE NEW YORK SHOWS

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NEW YORK POST
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NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

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"Outrageous Fortune"

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
November 4, 1943

Very Fancy But Very Foolish

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

NO AMOUNT of respect for what Miss Franken has tried to do in *Outrageous Fortune* can disguise how very badly she has done it. In fact, even what she has tried to do is not very clear except that she tried to do a great deal too much. Her stage is a-swarm with insecure and maladjusted people whose problems, when they are not violently colliding, are aired in tony but rubbishy talk.

Most of Miss Franken's people are Jews, and at the outset it appears as if their place in a troubled world is to be the theme of her play. Each of them lacks balance; even the old lady of the family can only accept life at the cost of no longer wanting to live.

But despite all these clouds, it hasn't even begun to rain. It is sex, in various dark forms, that really brings on the downpour. There is a middle-aged marriage that seems happy on the surface but proves unfulfilled deeper down. The yearning wife turns to her daughter's young violin teacher, who himself is dreadfully mixed up. The husband's engaged brother is homo-sexual, and drives his fiancee to attempted suicide. Only a wise and glamorous visitor to the house rides above the storm; and she is doomed by heart disease.

I don't know who could do full justice, either psychologically or philosophically, to this broad neurotic vista in which racial and sexual frustration have some appearance of cause and effect; but Miss Franken completely messes it up. She makes nothing seem either significant or convincing. She not only confuses, she falsifies. Her people talk elaborate folderol, but never shed any light. Her wise lady, in particular, is a trial and an absurdity; really wise women don't come to strange houses and spend the weekend playing God.

Entwined in fancy talk, nothing that happens moves us or makes us see the people behind the problems. As for the problems, they just overflow. To rewrite W. S. Gilbert, when everybody's suffering, then no one can seem sad. Such as they are, Miss Franken's real gifts lie in a far more hausfrau-ish direction; when, for example, she talks about food she makes sense.

'OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE'

Play by Rose Franken; staging by the author; setting designed by Raymond Sovey; presented at the Forty-eighth Street Theater by William Brown Meloney, Wednesday, November 3, 1943. The cast:

Mrs. Harris.....Maria Ouspenskaya
Dr. Andrew Goldsmith.....Eduard Franz
Madeleine Harris.....Margalo Gillmore
Mary.....Mabel Taylor
Bert Harris.....Frederic Tozere
Julian Harris.....Brent Sargent
Kitty Fields.....Adele Longmire
Barry Hamilton.....Dean Norton
Crystal Grainger.....Elsie Fergusen
Cynthia.....Margaret Williams
Gertrude Goldsmith.....Margaret Hamilton

There are good people in the cast; and Maria Ouspenskaya, Margalo Gillmore, Frederic Tozere and Eduard Franz have some chance to show their ability. Elsie Fergusen plays the wise lady as gracefully as can be expected but deserved something better to mark her return to Broadway. Adele Longmire, Brent Sargent and Dan Norton are hamstrung by impossible roles.

NEW YORK TIMES
November 4, 1943

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"Outrageous Fortune"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

TWO OF Rose Franken's earlier plays found great favor—"Another Language" and "Claudia." Her third, which William Brown Meloney brought to the Forty-eighth Street Theatre last evening, is not cut from the same piece of cloth. For where its two predecessors were simple, "Outrageous Fortune" is confused and complex; where the writing of "Another Language" and "Claudia" was easy, that of the third is conducted in a series of emotional gasps. As a cast composed of players of undoubted excellence perform it, "Outrageous Fortune" seems only pretentious when it means to be thoughtful, uncertain when it means to be precise.

• • •

Certain cynics at the time felt that "Claudia" had not enough plot for a play; if that were so, Miss Franken now has gone to the other extreme. In the course of "Outrageous Fortune" she touches upon middle age, normal love, profane love between members of the two sexes, homosexuality, the tradition of the family, fear, sickness and anti-Semitism. Normal plays are accustomed to taking up those subjects one at a time, but to try to encompass them all within three acts appeared last evening to be a bit outside the province of at least the Forty-eighth Street Theatre. Miss Frankell has darted around among her various ideas like a drummer in a jazz orchestra, pounding first one and then the other and settling nothing.

The setting is a suburban home. There is the matriarch, who likes to sneak down into the kitchen to cook; and her son, who has a feeling for the dignity of his race but an acceptance of its persecutions. There is the daughter-in-law who feels she is in love with a protege; and another son who, engaged to a neighbor, finally admits to homosexuality and goes to the Coast to write musical shows. The protege is going around with a middle-aged woman with a lurid past and heart disease, who seems to advocate living to the full. There is a doctor friend of the family who once was in love with the daughter-in-law but who married—shades of "Abie's Irish Rose"—an Irish girl. There also is a comedy maid and the neighboring fiance, who first takes to drink and shen tries suicide when she discovers what manner of man she loves. These all are stirred about with inevitable confusion.

• • •

The cast deserves a great deal better than it receives. As the lady with the past, Elsie Fergusen is making a too-infrequent trip to town from her country retirement, and she brings with her the charm and winning manner of old. Maria Ouspenskaya is the matriarch, and as usual hers is a clear-cut and tender portrait. Margalo Gillmore and Frederic Tozere are the son and his wife, Eduard Franz is the doctor, and Margaret Hamilton is the Irish girl who married him. Adele Longmire is pretty as the fiance, although her part does not make a great deal of sense, and Margaret Williams shows she probably has played the comedy maid before. Miss Franken directed in a setting by Raymond Sovey.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
November 4, 1943

Outrageous Fortune An Exciting Drama

By BURTON RASCOE

THE NATIVE drama, which for too long a time has been back in its second babyhood, gleefully kicking up its heels in its bassinet, grew adult with a vengeance last night with the presentation of Outrageous Fortune, by Rose Franken, at the 48th St. Theater.

It is an exciting, almost breathtaking, study of maladjusted hormones, nervous complexes and disabled psyches— morbid in the extreme as to subject matter but presented with such good taste, humane sentiment, artistic integrity, intellectual honesty and general high competence that the unsavory mess which engulfs the Harris household, like the fate of the descendents of Laius, becomes something more than an excitement of one's low curiosity; it becomes a somber, disturbing slice of life.

The play is superbly cast, featuring such favorites as Elsie Ferguson, Maria Ouspenskaya, Margalo Gillmore and Frederic Tozere. Miss Ferguson returns to the New York stage for the first time in 14 years and she brings with her that presence and that voice which made her so memorable in The Outcast and The Strange Woman. Mme. Ouspenskaya was her usual adorable self, which is a sort of combination of a tiny female Tiresias, the Cumean sybil and Jurgen's grandmother. But the acting sensation of the evening was scored by Mr. Tozere, hitherto cast only as a heavy, evil and malign, who presented the character of a "good" man—a naif, generous and upright simpleton more convincingly and more refreshingly than I have ever seen projected before. He was wonderful.

A Cast Obsessed

The case histories, as they are called in the journals of abnormal psychology, are so complex and interrelated in Outrageous Fortune that perhaps the best way of giving you an idea of what the drama is about is to present the principal characters, thus:

Bert Harris, a man of wealth, a believer in the sanctity of the family unit and the duty of loyalty of son to father and of brother to brother, never has been in love, although he has been married 14 years and has a son and daughter. Both he and his wife are a little ashamed of his mother, who lives with them, because of her fondness for pickled herrings and lentil soup, which she likes to prepare herself, and for her other displays of tastes they believe betray to others their former lowly economic state.

Madeleine Harris, his wife, who likewise never has been in love, yet has ardently desired to awaken love in her husband, vaguely resenting the simple devotion he pays her.

Dr. Goldsmith, the family physician, who always has been in love with Madeleine Harris but who married an Irish girl who caught him on the rebound and adores him.

Julian Harris, Bert's younger brother, whom Bert has sent to college and has coddled and worshipped as the genius of the family. Julian is complacently, arrogantly homosexual, but is engaged to—

Kitty Fields, who is really in love with Harry Hamilton but believes she is in love with Julian and is physically torn to pieces because she is aware, when no one else is, that Julian is trying to seduce Barry, who is a "borderline" case, whose only interest in women was aroused by his drab, middle-aged violin teacher when he was a boy, and who has sublimated his sexual impulses in music.

Play Controversial

Crystal Grainger, a notorious Messalina, whose affairs have been the talk of the capitals of Europe, now reaping, in her late 40's, the rewards of a glamorous life of sin and excess in the way of a bad heart and a philosophy of life. Brought into the Harris household as a week-end guest, she learns every detail of the whole catacomb of skeletons in the closet and proceeds, according to her enlightened philosophy, to make a man out of Barry, so he will be ready to marry Kitty, and, at the same time (I don't follow this) liberating Barry's and Madeline's secret yen for each other. She is proceeding to the point of also making a man out of Bert for Madeleine's sake and his own, after accusing him of being responsible for Julian's condition, when she dies of a heart attack.

Mrs. Franken has bitten off altogether more than she can chew; she had unconscionably dragged in a race question for no apparent reason except to make the problem seem harder; and her solutions (such as they are) are more glib and more questionable than those any pseudo-Freudian quack would dare offer; her play will be violently denounced, violently upheld, loathed, liked and discussed with heat—which will attest to its vitality and to its interest as sheer entertainment. It is a play people will be talking about and therefore one which every one will want to see.

"Outrageous Fortune"

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
November 4, 1943

Rose Franken Play Bows on Broadway

By ROBERT GARLAND

ROSE FRANKEN, author of "Claudia" and "Another Language," bit off more than I could chew last night at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre. In "Outrageous Fortune," her latest, if not her greatest, play, there is too much of almost everything. Except, perhaps, coherency! This seems a shame, because, into the new arrival at the erstwhile Windsor, has gone a deal of wisdom, observation, tolerance, and wry and ofttimes bitter humor.

As is the case with "Victory Belles," now at the Mansfield, "Outrageous Fortune" starts out by worrying about one thing and ends up by worrying about another.

Jumble of Neuroses

At the Forty-eighth Street Theatre, the initial worry is anti-Semitism, while the final worry is homosexuality, just as if the one had anything to do with the other. In between there are a slew of other worries, including heart-disease, infidelity, open-air poisoning, mother-complexes, the Negro problem and the unhappy likes of them. By the time the play is over, you exit wondering if such a civilization is worth fighting for.

All these overwrought, rundown, inhibited and thoroughly unlikeable fellow-Americans are to be observed in the home of the Bert Harrises, who live and have their slings and arrows of "Outrageous Fortune" in a handsome Raymond Sovey living-room somewhere on the outskirts of New York. Being rich and to the manor born, not even Dr. Andrew Goldsmith, the family physician, sends them to Bellevue—or anywhere else—for observation.

So they spend a Friday and Saturday evening in the Summer of 1941 rattling around in Mr. Sovey's setting, tripping over one another's natural born neuroses.

The plot is too complicated, too pathological, to be gone into in detail here. In it, boy meets girl, boy meets boy, and boy meets older woman in quick rotation. It is the boy-meets-boy relationship that wins, while the girl attempts suicide and the older woman retires to an adjoining room to die invisibly of heart disease. Taking pills in public—which is her major pastime—doesn't help her in the end.

'Top Drawer' Cast

In "Outrageous Fortune," Elsie Ferguson returns to the Broadway stage after a voluntary retirement of something like a dozen years. As the Lady of the Digitalis, she is beautiful, gracious and more than a bit overburdened with a sort of female "Stranger in the House" characterization. She works hard at her playing and her pill-taking, and it is a delight to have her around these playgoing parts again.

Maria Ouspenskaya is her always welcome and familiar self as the oldest of the harried Harrises, while Margalo Gillmore, looking unusually lovely, is one of the younger ones.

As a matter of fact, the entire cast is out of Broadway's top drawer, with Margaret Hamilton as funny as she can be as Dr. Goldsmith's comparatively normal wife and Brent Sargent, making his Broadway debut, handling the trying and tricky role of the boy who meets boy with taste and skill . . . "Outrageous Fortune" goes either deeper than it should go, or not deep enough. As it now is at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre, it merely falls unhappily between two schools.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
November 4, 1943

Eloquence Without Form

By HOWARD BARNES

ROSE FRANKEN has written the stuff of a fine play in "Outrageous Fortune." If she has failed to weld it into a cohesive and coherent unity it is still an engrossing try. In a season when the drama has had very little to say, she has spoken passionately and eloquently about the deep springs of human behavior and feeling. There can be little question that she herself is as confused as most of the troubled characters in the work. The result is an ungainly dramatic structure, with almost no resolution of the themes she sounds at the outset of the piece. The fact remains that it is good to find an author trying to communicate something of consequence to an audience.

• • •

Since the play is consummately performed at the Forty-eighth Street Theater, fragments of "Outrageous Fortune" take on extraordinary dimensions, even though they do not fit together in a curious jig saw puzzle. Elsie Ferguson, coming out of retirement to play the role of a seeress in a supposedly happy but tortured family, makes one regret her absence from the theater in no uncertain manner. Maria Ouspenskaya and the other players give a quality to good lines and good scenes which they richly deserve. The subject matter of "Outrageous Fortune" is none too pleasant, none too clear, but a lot of splendid writing has been given luminous interpretation.

• • •

Miss Franken has had, if anything, too much to say. She has stated a somber racial problem with honesty and sympathy, as she considers the barriers that a group of Jews raises against anti-Semitic intolerance. She has examined the frustrations of a middle-aged matron, who wants her husband to be in love with her, but knows only that he loves her on comparatively moral grounds. Finally she has plunged into a consideration of the bi-sexual urge, which drives the unstable brother of her rich Jewish banker off the deep end. It is small wonder that she has had a rather bad time tying these conflicting notions into a dramatic whole.

• • •

One can easily understand why Gilbert Miller withdrew from the production during its try-out. One can easily understand why the author's husband, William Brown Meloney has insisted on its having a Broadway showing. For "Outrageous Fortune" is full of fire, even though it spreads rather aimlessly across a stage. There are scenes between the Jewish matriarch (Mme. Ouspenskaya) and her sons which are deeply moving as well as eloquent. There are moments when Miss Ferguson almost pulls the play together, as she makes the ill-adjusted members of the family know themselves a little. There are almost no moments when the offering does not command one's attention.

• • •

It is rather awful to think of being stranded with the people of "Outrageous Fortune." Neurotic and defensive, they are explosive and rather disagreeable. All the more credit to the company, then, that they make them real and to a degree understandable. Miss Ferguson and Mme. Ouspenskaya dominate the acting with truly brilliant portrayals of the two characters who are best equipped to withstand slings and arrows. But Frederic Tozere is fine as the smug and racially conscious banker; Margalo Gillmore gives a perplexing performance of the wife; Adele Longmire is excellent as a girl who knows her fiance will never love her or any other woman, and Dean Norton, Margaret Hamilton, Eduard Franz and Brent Sargent fill in a rich, if somewhat crazy mosaic of characterization. Miss Franken has not pulled off a play, but she has written a lot of good theater in "Outrageous Fortune."

THE NEW YORK SUN
November 4, 1943

'Outrageous Fortune' Brings Good Writing, Superb Acting in Unsatisfying Play

By WARD MOREHOUSE

ROSE FRANKEN, a dramatist to be reckoned with, now gives Broadway her latest work in "Outrageous Fortune," which came last evening into the Forty-eighth Street Theater. Here is a piece that reveals the first genuine writing to be found in any new play this season and it has some tremendously effective scenes. But, taken as a whole, it must be put down as a disappointing job of playmaking for one of Miss Franken's gifts.

"Outrageous Fortune," besides bringing sharp dialogue and some superb acting into the Forty-eighth, also brings about the return of Elsie Ferguson, absent from the stage for thirteen years. Looking marvelously well, and as throatily exciting as always, Miss Ferguson gives a distinguished performance.

The locale of this new play by the author of "Another Language" and "Claudia" is the near-to-New York shore home of Bert Harris and his wife Madeleine. Bert is a wealthy Jew—a good provider, good husband, devoted to his wife, his child and his mother, who tries to hold the family together. Bert is fundamental and conservative, proud of his blood and his race. His searching, rebellious and unhappy wife is in love with a young violinist. His younger brother, engaged to a neurotic girl, is sexually abnormal, and defiantly so. One of the family's closest friends is a frustrated Jewish doctor, who has failed to win a desired hospital post because of racial prejudice.

Into this disturbed household comes Crystal Grainger, a glamorous and notorious woman, but otherwise unidentified. And in the course of three acts the playwright shows the influence of this strange secure, wise and understanding visitor upon the lives of these people of outrageous fortune. The play ends with Crystal's death from heart failure. She has opened Bert's eyes and she has made her plea for tolerance, but most of the problems of the Harris family seemed to me to be as far from solution as they had ever been.

Miss Franken's first act is by far the best of the three. It holds up well; but in the second act "Outrageous Fortune" flounders and never recovers its early strength. Some of the short scenes which are strung through the play are curiously fascinating, even powerful, in themselves, but they are not pieced together satisfactorily.

The company is splendid. Miss Ferguson, in the role of Crystal Grainger, who moves through this play as something of a feminine counterpart of the principal character in "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," puts the glamour of the theater of another day into Forty-eighth street. When she first appeared midway in the opening act many of those in last night's audience were gazing upon her for the first time in their lives, but there were others to whom she brought memories of "Pierre of the Plains" . . . of "The Battle" . . . of "Such a Little Queen."

Margalo Gillmore, always a player of warmth and conviction, does all that any actress could with the confused and confusing role of the wife. Frederic Tozere gives believability to the character of Bert, his best acting in our theater to date. Brent Sargent plays the role of the straying younger brother with tremendous skill, one of the most forceful performances you'll see in many months of playgoing. Eduard Franz, as Dr. Andrew Goldsmith, a character that might have stepped out of the pages of Chekhov, is excellent. So are Maria Ouspenskaya, Dean Norton, Adele Longmire, Margaret Williams and Margaret Hamilton. It's a company to cheer about.

Certainly "Outrageous Fortune" is a drama to which you listen every instant. I wish the whole of it were as good as some of its scenes. Miss Franken has all the threads of her story, but she fails to weave them into the fabric of a satisfying play.

"Outrageous Fortune" is interesting, but it's muddled.

"Outrageous Fortune"

November 4, 1943
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

'Outrageous Fortune' Certainly Slings a Large Mess of Arrows

By JOHN CHAPMAN

AFTER fourteen years away from the theatre Elsie Ferguson comes back and walks into the most screwed-up mess of people. Most of them were there on the stage with her at the 48th St. last night, but it must be confessed that I was also among them much of the time. Rose Franken's new drama, "Outrageous Fortune," is interesting but confusing.

It is also very well acted by practically everybody. It is a great pleasure to sit and look at the lovely Ferguson profile and hear her seductive voice. It is a thrill to see little old Maria Ouspenskaya command a scene with endearing gallantry and fine wisdom.

All but three or four of the eleven characters in "Outrageous Fortune" have neuroses, complexes or tendencies toward an unnatural love life. In addition, practically all of them are Jews and sensitive about it. The play would be pretty grim if it weren't for Miss Franken's knack for making people talk like human beings and for her instinct for humor.

Krafft-Ebing Setup

As it is, it's grim enough. One wife has a husband who is so confoundedly normal she's going crazy. Before the evening's over you learn that the husband is a little batty for being so normal. One man is a homosexual and this so distresses the girl he's engaged to that she tries to commit suicide. Another young man is a borderline case, but is saved from being pushed to the wrong side of the border.

Why, there is a colored maid who seems completely understandable and funny right to the last second of the play—and then she bursts into song as an expression of grief the minute her beloved mistress dies.

Miss Ferguson is one of the normal ones. She's merely a Woman With a Past who has had many lovers, the newest of whom is the borderline case, who is young enough to be her son. She drops in for a weekend with this case-history Jewish family, and I think it was Miss Franken's intention to have her presence, in one way or another, straighten everybody out. But maybe Miss Franken had better come up to my house for a weekend and straighten me out.

Miss Hamilton's Back

The performances are all good and many are excellent. Margalo Gillmore's acting of the neurotic wife who wants a husband to be a lover too has conviction. Frederic Tozere, as the husband, plays easily and is likeable. Margaret Hamilton, an old grad of Miss Franken's "Another Language," is in again with a badly needed and excellently done comedy part.

Adele Longmire is the lass who, after several unhappy outbursts, tries to knock herself off. At the end of one of her bouts of grief Miss Hamilton comes in and queries, "What was that all about?" Last night the line got a guffaw from the audience which the author couldn't have expected when she wrote it.

The evening is Ouspenskaya's and Ferguson's, with the former as an ancient, simple Jewish mother very much alone in a foreign and crazy world. And now, if you don't mind, I'll go out and try to wake up some psychoanalyst and ask him, "Doc, why in the hell can't I write a plain, simple review of this play? Is my mind all right? Huh, Doc?

NEW YORK POST
November 4, 1943

Elsie Ferguson Returns To the Stage in "Outrageous Fortune"

By WILELLA WALDORF

ROSE FRANKEN seems to have gathered in enough subject matter for seven or eight plays in "Outrageous Fortune," which opened last night at the 48th St. Theatre. Strangely enough, she never quite succeeds in actually writing any one of them.

"Outrageous Fortune," nevertheless, is our favorite of Miss Franken's dramatic works so far, partly because we did not care much for either of her previous successes, "Another Language" and "Claudia," and partly because it introduces a varied group of characters whose inhibitions, prejudices, neuroses and complexes are frankly and tolerantly discussed in a literate manner.

Miss Franken brings together a number of reasonably intelligent people for a week-end in the country, and proceeds to show us how they are all bearing up under the slings and arrows of one sort of outrageous fortune or another.

In the course of her symposium on adversity, Miss Franken boldly goes into such matters as the race problem, with special emphasis on the Jews, and also devotes considerable attention to homosexuality. The world is sick just now, and so, Miss Franken tells us, are most of the people in it. Some of the interesting invalids in the Harris household are suffering from such familiar ailments as old age, swollen gums and heart trouble. Others are plagued by less normal diseases.

A "Celebrity" Arrives

In case all this sounds uncommonly dismal, don't you believe it. Miss Franken may be deadly serious in her purpose of restating what are now generally accepted liberal views on such subjects as racial discrimination and sexual abnormality. But she has written into her social document a number of shrewdly observed, even genuinely diverting, characters and then engaged a very able company of actors to portray them.

Even if "Outrageous Fortune" were a downright bad play, which it isn't, it would be worth far more than the price of admission to see Elsie Ferguson back on the stage as Crystal Grainger. Mrs. Grainger was described by the more knowing members of the party as a "celebrity," a somewhat vague distinction having to do chiefly with the fact that she seems to have had a prodigious number of lovers in her time, and once attended a first-night accompanied only by her colored maid.

This introduction sounded dire, but as soon as Miss Ferguson walked in with her hat over one eye, showed a disinclination to dress for dinner and huskily confessed a passion for herring, it was obvious that Mrs. Grainger was going to be somebody worth meeting instead of the theatrical stencil advance reports had indicated.

Miss Ferguson has been away from Broadway for fourteen years. The only time we ever saw her was in a terrible play called "Scarlet Pages," though we have often gaped over beauteous photographs in old theatre magazines.

Still, never would we have believed that Elsie Ferguson could be as delightful as she is in "Outrageous Fortune." She has charm, distinction, and a quality that is becoming rarer and rarer in the theatre these evenings—magnetism. How Miss Ferguson could ever have been permitted to retire and go to live in Connecticut we cannot imagine. She must never be allowed to do such a thing again.

An Excellent Cast

As if this weren't sufficient reward for one evening, especially in this arid season, Miss Franken and her husband, William Brown Meloney, who is producing the play, have also given us no less a personage than Maria Ouspenskaya, whom it is a privilege to watch; and such talented players as Frederic Tozere, Margalo Gillmore, Brent Sargent, Adele Longmire, Margaret Hamilton, Eduard Franz, Dean Norton, and Margaret Williams, all good in their separate ways, and most of them suffering either from their own private neuroses or from somebody else's.

"Outrageous Fortune" may be more of a clinical study than a play, but it has an enlightened and tolerant viewpoint on some old problems, and it dares to talk out loud in a sensible manner on subjects that are usually mentioned only in a whisper, or never mentioned at all. More than that, much of it is as entertaining as any of Miss Franken's earlier comedies. See it.

"Artists and Models"

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
November 7, 1943

More Models Than Artists

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

A drenching downpour through which I just slogged my way to a typewriter has rather softened my feelings about *Artists and Models*. There, for one thing, I sat warm and dry. There, also, I saw some fine looking girls cross the stage, heard Jane Froman sing some very pleasant songs, watched Mary Raye & Naldi do their graceful ballroom dancing and—well, saw some fine looking girls cross the stage. Even by comparison with that rainstorm, the show is not exactly an unalloyed delight. At times, it seems to come out of some old trouper's memory book; at other times it just seems slung together by the stagehands and somebody's little nephew. All in all it's a pretty awful mess; but there is something cheerful and fairly high spirited about it.

Bear those high spirits in mind from here on, for any description of the actual material is apt to depress you. *Artists and Models* is built around the idea that one of its producers wanted to load it with vaudeville, another with burlesque, a third with Hollywood, while there were last-minute votes for a circus and a ballet. The gents finally decided to have a go at all of them. Presumably the vastness of the undertaking left no time, among other things, for inventing even one small joke. This leaves such agreeable comics as Marty May and Jackie Gleason stranded with scub souvenirs as "They're debutantes—came out in 1941 and haven't been home since." All the poor fellows can do is kid their acts and plod on.

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The ballet is one of the most astounding ventures into choreography that the yearning spirit has ever conceived. It had me frantically searching for program notes, in the hope that I could pass on to you what it meant. No notes being provided I would suggest with some trepidation that it is an attempt to cram into 10 minutes all the ballets in existence, along with quite a few that have never been dreamt up. There is, at any rate, a splendid daring about it.

Jane Froman, still recovering from her injuries in the Clipper crash, was properly the heroine of the evening, being greeted with an ovation. She has a good voice and some not-half-bad songs; and she appears seated very gracefully each time she sings.

The costumery is vivid and expensive, and the sets range from the simple to the spangled. I don't think there's any more to say except that *Artists and Models* will be around for a long time to come.

"Artists and Models"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
November 6, 1943

Jane Froman Stars in 'Artists And Models,' But It's Not So Hot

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"ARTISTS AND MODELS," which opened last night at the Broadway Theatre, isn't much good. It is a revue which is neither high class nor low class, but just a lot of stuff, and it would be better if it were either higher or lower.

A revue is simply vaudeville with more girls, more scenery, more costumes, hand-written songs and, if possible, tailor-made gags. The formula is flexible and one would think a revue would be easy to make—but somehow it isn't easy to make a good one. It takes specialists, and I think the trouble with last night's show was that the wrong kind of specialists got into the business.

The producers are Lou Walters, Don Ross, E. M. Loew and Michael Redstone. Mr. Ross is the husband of Jane Froman, star of "Artists and Models." Mr. Walters is a successful night club operator and is billed in the program as the man who "conceived and staged" the "entire production." I am told that the other two are Boston night club men.

Theatres Are Different

Being a night club specialist is very nice work, but I am afraid it does not qualify one as a revue specialist. A theatre is a big place with a big stage; its audience is by and large, sober and demanding. If an act does not happen to be interesting, the audience cannot distract itself by eating, drinking, smoking or talking across the table; it just has to sit there and hope things will get better.

Many a night club success will therefore not stand exposure in a full-size house like the Broadway, and that is what is wrong with "Artists and Models." People who seem witty and talented after midnight in a night club don't look so good in the cold gray dawn of an 8:40 P.M. Broadway premiere.

Jane Froman, still crippled from the Lisbon Clipper crash, sits among the billows of some lovely picture gowns and sings now and again. She is pretty and she is able, and one of her numbers, "Swing Low, Sweet Harriet," is good. The theatre's amplification system is, however, too brilliant in tone and it spoils some of her best effects. The sound men ought to go to work and cut down on the high frequencies.

Raye and Naldi Help

The rest of the show? Well, a "Parade of Models." Good looking girls, and a lot of them, badly dressed. Marty May, Jackie Gleason and Billy Newell trying to be funny with no comedy material. Couple of dancers named the Worth sisters. An awful sketch which is supposed to involve Dorothy Lamour and Bing Crosby or somebody on a tropic isle.

Also the Radio Aces, three men who sing before a microphone just like the radio. A circus number for the Christiani acrobatic troupe, for no great reason. Collette Lyons, a night club discuse who might be all right over a few highballs after midnight, but who is no Beatrice Lillie earlier than the witching hour. The ballroom dance team of Raye and Naldi, who are always, very, very good, and who give "Artists and Models" quite a lift.

The songs, by Dan Shapiro, Milton Pascal and Phil Charig, usually go in one ear and out the other. Watson Barratt's sets manage to fill a big space.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
November 6, 1943

'Artists and Models' Opens at Broadway

By ROBERT GARLAND

JANE FROMAN, in fine voice and looking lovelier than ever, is quite rightly the star of the long, luxurious and not very funny extravaganza last night relighted the Broadway Theatre. "Artists and Models" is the piece's name, although it might just as well be called "Crackers and Cheese" or "Lea and Perrins." On second thought, there are some models who, under such titles as "Velvet Night," "Golden Day," "My Sin" and "Midnight Madness," open up the show.

And Jane Froman, whether she is singing "Swing Low, Sweet Harriet," "My Heart Is On a Binge Again" or "You Are Romance," is most certainly an artist. "Artist and Models" might well be the offering's title.

Lou Walters and Don Ross, in association with E. M. Loew and Michael Redstone, have spared no expense to make their joint production a handsome one. There are colorful settings by Watson Barratt, stunning costumes by Kathryn Kuhn, original choreography by Natalie Kamarova and a large, well balanced orchestra under the direction of Max Meth. With money no object, it seems a pity there was so little wit and humor lying around in the open market.

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After the "Parade of the Models" already mentioned—these models include also "Tempest Topaz," "Bridal Blush," "Dusky Dawn" and "Radiant Ruby"—there is a bit of minstrelsy out of which emerges a song called "Way up North in Dixieland." And out of "Way up North in Dixieland" emerge Miss Froman and "Swing Low, Sweet Harriet," a number the little lady makes the most of. More than the most, if you pin me down to it.

Then, for no reason, good or bad, "Artists and Models" turns burlesque on the customers, with candy-selling in the aisles and a strip tease by the Worth Sisters with all their clothes on.

Next comes Hollywood with a production number entitled "The Road to Manasooris." This super-duper epic in technicolor goes on for quite a while, ending up with a fairly funny song in praise of "Sears Roebuck"—yes, they include the venerable one about the uses and abuses of the catalogue in the country—and a startlingly effective "Dance of the Cobra" by Harold and Lola. This cobra dance is one of the high spots of the evening.

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So it goes! There's Frances Faye indulging in a concert, with four lady harpists swinging the accompaniment. And Jane Froman, singing of how her heart is once more on a binge. And "North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota Moon," sung good and loud by Jackie Gleason, Marty May and Billy Newell, refugees from vaudeville. And an Agnes de Mille-like ballet called "New York Heartbeat," with special music by Georges Kamaroff and choreography by Mme. Kamarova.

The famous Christiani Troupe opens the second stanza with its familiar circus antics. Coming in from a sidewalk smoke, you feel as if "The Skin of Our Teeth" had at least reached its ultimate conclusion.

Then, to finish out the evening, Collette Lyons sings about a tealess afternoon tea; Jane Froman sings "You Are Romance," to the melody of which Mary Raye and Naldi dance stunningly; Gloria Le Roy tosses off a specialty; Nick Long, Don Saxon and Mildred Law blow off their tops, and, just before the grand finale, Jane Froman once more brings down the house with a group of ballads . . . After I've remarked that "Artists and Models" could be quieter and funnier, it's quite all right with me!

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
November 6, 1943

Artists and Models Wrongly Titled

By BURTON RASCOE

THEY laid the table with the choicest linen at the Broadway last night, brought out the gold service, and, with great pomp and circumstance, served a very green persimmon. My mouth is still all puckered up.

The offering is called Artists and Models. There are plenty of models in it—most of them real beauties; for the chorus is the prettiest, most shapely and most fetchingly costumed in town—but (with the lone and notable exception of the beautiful, lyrical and gallant Jane Froman) no artists.

Lou Walters, the producer, director and co-author of the dialogue, is a night club impressario. Artists and Models is only an over-extended night club floor show. It belongs in a high-class saloon, not in a Broadway theater. It, or parts of it, might be tolerable, if broken up into a 9 o'clock and a midnight show and if you had six or eight drinks under your belt and could reach out and take another snort or two every time you became really conscious of the show. As it was, I believe there was more between-acts-bar patronage in the neighborhood of the Broadway than at any show this season. What's more, quite a number of patrons, who had gone out for a quick one, obviously decided to stay right where they were; for vacant seats during the second act were numerous.

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Has Few Laughs

Believe it or not, there is not a laugh in the entire two and a half hours. Early in the proceedings, a supposedly comic trio (Jackie Gleason, Marty May and Billy Newell) committed a few fouls in the way of low smut, which fell so flat that apparently they decided not to risk such a rebuff again and canceled a whole skit scheduled for the next act. The audience sat on its hands and looked grim, not only at these three (who may have been whipped by the material Mr. Walters and his co-authors dished up for them) but at Collette Lyons, who appears to be giving an imitation of Joan Davis and Jimmy Durante simultaneously without having rehearsed much. Nobody else in the show was funny, either.

On the credit side, there is, first of all, Jane Froman. She makes only three appearances and they seem far between. But you are guaranteed a thrill when she sings, My Heart Is On a Binge Again, and You Are Romance. Her tragic physical disability, resulting from the crash of a Lisbon clipper, which makes it necessary for her to appear on the stage only in a sitting posture, endows her with a special and touching glamor; for she has grit, courage and spirit as well as beauty and talent.

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Mary Raye Stands Out

There is one dancer, Mary Raye, of the ballroom team of Raye and Naldi, who, though given to tense gestures, has a great deal in the way of personality and technique. Otherwise the choreography of this show is uninspired and spiritless. The two ballet numbers, New York Heartbeat and You Are Romance, are not only incredibly banal in design but executed in amateurish fashion. The various skits have all the excitement of charades performed impromptu by Sunday-school picknickers.

No other credits beyond those mentioned can be wrung from me except to Kathryn Kuhn, who designed and executed the voluptuous costumes; and to Max Meth and his orchestra.

This is the second time this year I have been impelled to look up the name of the orchestra leader, in shows otherwise pretty bad, because of the outstanding merit of the music from the pit; and both times the name turns out to be Max Meth. The music he and his boys made in Bright Lights of 1944 was about the only good thing in that show. They were superb again last night.

"Artists and Models"

NEW YORK SUN
November 6, 1943

'Artists and Models,' Big, Brazen and Costly, Has Looks, Girls, No Comedy

By WARD MOREHOUSE

"ARTISTS AND MODELS" is a big, costly, good-looking show—a brazen hodge-podge that has pretty girls, bright costumes, and very feeble comedy. Actually, it's a $4.40 night club production, moved into the Broadway theater, and there it began playing last night.

The program credits are practically endless; a veritable swarm of people having contributed to music, lyrics and dialogue; to choreography, scenery, costumes and direction. The cast has been recruited from stage, screen, radio and the night spots, the hot spots. An outstanding comedian to ramble through this entertainment would have been of enormous help.

The star of "Artists and Models" is Jane Froman. Certainly she is its chief asset. She makes her first appearance on the New York stage since she almost lost her life in the Clipper crash in the Tagus River beside the teeming city of Lisbon in February of this very year. Her right leg is now in a cast to the hip and so it will be for months. But no reference is made to Miss Froman's injury, and those seeing the show who not aware of her Lisbon experience would never know that she is severely, but temporarily, clippled. Prettily attired in flowing silks and satins, she sings her songs from a platform which is rolled onto the stage just in time for her numbers. She is charming and decorative, as always, and is in excellent voice. She uses a small concealed microphone. Her best number is "Swing Low, Sweet Harriet."

This new show at the Broadway, a mixture of everything, makes only a few attempts at comedy, and these generally fall flat. Jackie Gleason, a comedian on the hefty side gets best results. The vaudeville turn, "North Dakota, South Dakota Moon," which he does with Marty May and Billy Newell, is one of the production's high spots. Marty May is a bland and amusing fellow to have around a musical show but seldom gets the material he deserves.

Mary Raye and Naldi are first-rate dancers; Collette Lyons has a lot of zest; Mildred Law is very attractive; Nick Long is as nimble as ever, and there is a fascinating dance of the cobra by Harold and Lola. Jackie Gleason's brief imitation of Jimmy Durante is excellent. And as a matter of fact I wish Durante could have been around in person—and all evening.

'ARTISTS AND MODELS'

Musical show starring Jane Froman; lyrics and music by Dan Shapiro, Milton Pascal and Phil Charig; dialogue by Lou Walters, Don Ross and Frank Luther; choreography by Natalie Kamarova, assisted by Lauretta Jefferson; scenery by Watson Harratt; costumes by Kathryn Kuhn; presented by Lou Walters and Don Ross, in association with E. M. Loew and Michael Redstone, at the Broadway Theater Friday, November 5, 1943. The cast includes Frances Faye, Jackie Gleason, Marty May, Collette Lyons, Billy Newell, Radio Aces, Nick Long, Carol King, Mildred Law, Mary Raye and Naldi. Production staged by Lou Walters.

The Broadway's new show includes spectacle numbers, skits, specialties, a ballet and frequent appearances of Jane Froman, which is all right with everybody. The show is in two parts and the first half is far the better. The minstrel number, "Way Up North in Dixieland," coming near the opening, is very good indeed.

This new "Artists and Models" is no epochal event in New York stage history and you can go right on living even though you miss it, but I suspect that the Messrs. Walters & Ross have brought it in at the right time. There is loose money in midtown-Manhattan, and playgoers who are not too demanding are now aprowl, looking for places to spend it. I predict that the Broadway's new tenant will fare well at the box office.

NEW YORK POST
November 6, 1943

The New "Artists and Models" Is Big and Very, Very Loud

By WILELLA WALDORF

"ARTISTS AND MODELS," the new revue revealed last night at the Broadway Theatre, began with a Parade of Models. Fifteen tall young women described in the program under such perfumed names as Velvet Night, Bridal Blush, Dusky Dawn and My Sin, made their way down a flight of stairs without mishap and paraded around the stage for a considerable period, using that lurching movement that is the trade-mark of the modeling profession.

When the curtain finally hid them from view one of the comedians came out and remarked that hereafter any connection with the title would be purely coincidental.

The entire cast then embarked on one of the most dismal shows that we have seen in—well, in a couple of weeks.

A Matter of Size

The difference between "Artists and Models" and the other tiresome musicals of the season is chiefly one of size. There are so many people in it that very few of them have a chance to make their presence known. The people who do make their presence known are around so much, seething with bad material, that you wish they would go away.

Reading up on the program notes during some of the sleepier interludes, we discovered that most of the performers hail from radio and the night-club belt, or both. In their honor everything was lavishly microphonic. A large amplifier lifted the voices of Jane Froman, the Peters Sisters, Frances Faye, etc., and flung them at the audience with a metallic clang that gave us the sensation of having just chewed up a handful of steel gratings.

When a trio called the Radio Aces started whooping it up, we swallowed the gratings whole and started to gnaw on a mouthful of rusty nails. This is very bad for the digestion.

Miss Froman Looks Well

Miss Froman, the star of the show, came off rather better than anybody else in that she managed some quieter tones that were pleasant. But her low notes boomed and reverberated. She looked, by the way, more attractive than we ever remember having seen her before.

Of the rest, Mary Raye and Naldi, the ballroom dancers, came on late in the evening for some of their graceful twirling, but the poor comedians, Marty May, Jackie Gleason and Billy Newell, were so scantily supplied with jokes that it was hardly worth their while to appear at all. Mr. Gleason worked himself into a lather imitating movie personalities to some effect. Mr. May seemed to feel pretty blue about the whole thing and who can blame him?

Is This Hot-Spot Stuff?

Earl Wilson, The Post's night-club expert, will probably report more accurately on some of the night-club notables than this department is able to. All we can say is that we haven't been in a night club in some time, and if "Artists and Models" is a fair sample of what the boys are seeing and hearing in the hot spots, we don't mind staying away indefinitely.

The more opulent production numbers went on much too long, lacked pace and novelty, showmanship and style. A gentleman who remembers way back before the first World War told us some of the show reminded him of Keith's in Richmond in the fall of '14. It was generally agreed, even by people who had never been to Richmond, that this was a slur on the dear old Keith Circuit.

It is quite possible that things might have seemed a bit different last night had we been seated at a table, with glasses and bottles about, a set of dominoes handy, and maybe a pack of cards, and the latest magazines, an i some ear-muffs.

NEW YORK TIMES
November 6, 1943

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"Artists and Models"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

BEING one of the ranking geniuses of the night clubs, Lou Walters has figured that what Broadway can use just now is a show of girls, tunes, more girls, costumes—and girls. No doubt he is right. At all events, he and a group of associates put the theory to the test last evening by opening an edition of "Artists and Models" at the Broadway Theatre. His is a handsome show, with a little bit of everything from burlesque to the circus, and if it seems to get a little windy and tedious now and then, Mr. Walters' people come back and by sheer weight of numbers start things moving along again. No one will be able to say honestly he did not see plenty of show at the Broadway.

For "Artists and Models" takes pretty much the whole world of the Broadway musical as its oyster. There are parades of models, which when the depth of the stage and the size of the cast are considered, means models stretching back almost to the horizon. There are songs sung by Jane Froman, who is making her first appearance since her accident in the Clipper crash. There are production numbers dealing with marines and islands ruled by girls, and with the circus. Remembering the circus, Mr. Walters has thought of the Christiani family, and into "Artists and Models" has gone that section of the family which needs no horses for its tumbling.

Naturally there are dancers—besides the normal chorus, which does the normal steps. Mary Raye and Naldi are up there to lend a light dignity to a song called "You Are Romance" when Miss Froman has finished singing it; and two known as Harold and Lola do something rather special with a "Dance of the Cobra." It is unfortunate that there must come a time to mention the comedy of "Artists and Models," for that is practically frightful in the school of "They're debutantes; they came out in 1941 and they haven't been home since." With his experience of the clubs, Mr. Walters probably has reasoned no one will care. No doubt he is right.

Miss Froman has a number of songs, put forth in her old way, and with "Swing Low, Sweet Harriet," as part of a minstrel number, one of the best. As a result of the accident she still cannot stand, but there is no reference in the show to that fact and an audience, not knowing, would be unaware of it. Jackie Gleason, Marty May and Billy Newell offer most of the comedy, such as it is, with one item, a take-off on vaudeville named "North Dakota, South Dakota Moon," being pretty funny. The Radio Aces do some of their stuff; a lady named Mayla sings a couple of semi-sultry numbers and Collette Lyons gives an "Afternoon Tea" interpretation which might be better in the clubs.

Since the world is the oyster, "Artists and Models" stops nowhere for long. Just two places removed from Frances Faye at piano and in voice, with four harps—four—as a stage background, is a ballet called "New York Heartbeat," which is a bit of all ballet. And not long before that is a piece of burlesque on burlesque, with a randy butcher and a delicate strip, and a prologue in which Mr. Walters throws down the cards. The show, he says, will be a bit of everything since he and his associates could not plan which type they wanted. And there it is, just that. The intellectuals may not like it, but there are few left. Mr. Walters knows his public.